



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting
April 12, 2010
City Hall, Boards & Commissions Room
301 West Second Street, Austin, TX 78701

MINUTES

Committee Members in Attendance

Ben De Leon
Kathryne Tovo

Dave Sullivan

Members of the public in attendance:

Frank Harren
Tom Davis
Michael Holleran
Lucy Galbraith

Paula Pacotti
Cirara Ortega
William Shamburg

Members of staff in attendance:

Garner Stoll (PDR)

Mark Walters (PDR)

1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

Frank Harren spoke with three concerns:

- a.) the public input gathered during CFS #1 about density was watered down in the draft Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan vision statement
- b.) the planning process needs to focus on density in order to improve Austin's livability
- c.) urged the committee to realize that high population growth is inevitable and the community must plan for it

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES MARCH 8, 2010 MINUTES

Commissioner Sullivan moved to approve the minutes; Commissioner De Leon seconded. The vote was unanimous.

3. OLD BUSINESS

None.

4. NEW BUSINESS

a. *Presentation on the draft Imagine Austin Vision statement.*

The presentation covered the following areas:

- *Input received for Community Forum Series #1*
- *The timeline to create the vision statement*
- *Qualities of a Vision Statement*
- *Review of the draft Vision Statement preamble*

Following the presentation the Committee asked for any public comment.

Frank Harren addressed the committee and discussed the lack of a mention of density in draft vision statement. Commissioner Sullivan engaged Mr. Harren in a discussion about the purpose of density and that it should not be viewed as an end but as a tool to reach other ends and that the discussion about density should focus what levels of density are appropriate. Mr. Harren discussed the desire among some quarters of the community to see density caps removed or reduced in an “adult way.” Commissioner Sullivan mentioned that the message about density needs to be tailored carefully packaged. Mr. Harren discussed the importance of changing the community tone of the density conversation if Austin is to become a livable city.

Tom Davis spoke of the importance of density in the face of ever increasing gasoline and fuel prices. He commented that density must be humane to be effective.

Commissioner Tovo asked if the draft vision statement addressed density and it was shown that there were several points where it was mentioned without directly using the word density.

b. *Presentation of data/information on best practice policy issues related to Historic and Cultural Preservation in Austin that should be considered as part of the Comprehensive Plan.*

The Committee asked if there were any interested people in the audience who would like to address them on the importance of including aspects of Historic and Cultural preservation in the Comprehensive Plan.

Dr. Michael Halloran addressed the Committee on several points:

- a.) the Historic and Cultural elements should be increased in the plan and
- b.) cultural landscapes should also be addressed and preserved through the plan as well as hydrological landscapes and that there a number of these different landscapes in Austin.

Commissioner Tovo asked Dr. Halloran how other cities have dealt with Historic and Cultural issues in the Comprehensive Plans. Dr. Halloran provided several examples and discussed several characteristics of these elements:

- a.) these elements tend to be more important and significant for plans in older cities,
- b.) it is used in older, declining cities as an economic development tool,
- c.) Austin is neither type of the aforementioned cities,

- d.) the plan should identify our community values relating to Historic and Cultural issues and determine how things change and what is preserved,
- e.) fast-growing cities run the risk of losing the valued historic elements.

Commissioner De Leon asked staff if the draft Vision Statement captures the diversity of cultures. Staff advised the commissioner that it was included in the “Caring and Committed” portion of the draft vision. Commissioner De Leon suggested that greater inclusivity be added by adding language about other cultures.

City of Austin Historic Preservation Officer Steve Sadowsky addressed the Committee. He thought including historic preservation as a significant element in the Comprehensive Plan was good idea and that its inclusion could provide clearer direction for a city-wide preservation plan.

Commissioner Sullivan talked about the preservation of “iconic businesses” in light of historic preservation. Mr. Sadowsky discussed Los Angeles’ program for cultural and historic landmarks. The discussion continued to discuss places or things that may not be necessarily be historic, but culturally important and what types of steps or programs that may be applied such as revolving loans for façade rehabilitation. Dr. Halloran mentioned the importance of differentiating between historically and culturally important places but that the new Comprehensive Plan should express preservation of iconic businesses as a goal. Mr. Harren discussed his like and the importance of old buildings, but asked the Committee to consider that old buildings where once new and that sometimes people in Austin use preservation as a tool to stop change even if there is not a historically significant structure involved.

5. STAFF BRIEFINGS

- c. Staff presented an overview of the activities associated with Community Forum Series #2.

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:50.